


at the same time when large-scale migrations have begun. To believe that the United States, because of some divine dispensation, or in virtue of the abundance of automobiles and color television sets available to its population, is or will be immune to those dangers of centrifugal crumbling that now beset the Russian Empire, is not only thoughtless but irresponsible. These present and future dangers include not only tribal savagery and domestic disorders but the potential disruption of the very framework of the Republic.

That is the prime matter of American national security: not whether Americans should or should not support Afghans or Azerbaijanis or Bessarabians or Nicaraguans or Honduran “Freedom Fighters”; nor, as Section Nine of the platform of the Republican Party as early as 1956 (!) stated, that our aim should be “the establishment of American naval and air bases *all around the world.*” The italics are mine. 

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Last fall San Franciscans voted on whether to provide benefits for the unmarried lovers of city employees, including homosexuals. To the horror of the gay-rights establishment, the referendum narrowly lost. The margin almost certainly came from the “no” votes of Asian-American and Mexican-American immigrants.

Opponents of mass immigration may have the wrong answer, but they ask the right question. Do immigrants further poison our already sick culture? If so we should keep them out, no matter how much they may help our economy. But if they bring antidotes to our homegrown decadence, we should welcome them.

Consider the attack on the family—perhaps the gravest current threat to our heritage, backed by most of the Fortune 500 as well as the media and government. Who provides more recruits to feminism: Latin and Confucian newcomers, or native suburbanites? Who signs up for the National Organization of Women, who demands value-free sex education and round-the-clock daycare centers?

Vietnamese-American students rebuke their classmates for their rudeness to teachers. Refugees from Afghanistan

refuse to enroll their children in coed gym classes. Mexican-Americans stubbornly honor Our Lady of Guadalupe, not Frosty the Snowman. We need more such citizens, not fewer.

The strongest point against immigrants is that they are strangers to the Anglo-American constitutional tradition. True, this tradition cannot be learned overnight—but it doesn’t have to be. First-generation immigrants are too busy for politics; what counts is their children and grandchildren, up for grabs like everyone else in our untidy ideological marketplace. Over time, South European ethnics such as Antonin Scalia may do as much to restore our Constitution as the WASP Abraham Lincoln or the Scandinavian Earl Warren did to destroy it.

It is the converts to a tradition who bring the most imagination and vigor to its defense. Consider the Disraeli family. Consider the post-World War II conservative revival in America, the leadership of which came disproportionately from Catholic immigrant stock. If my fellow WASPs had remained in charge as in the 1930’s, we would probably never have stopped losing.

A tradition especially needs newcomers to stir things up when it is so decayed that the challenge is not to conserve but to restore. The works of immigrant scholars such as Eric Voegelin or Leo Strauss may be flawed, but our universities would be even more impoverished without them. Voegelin and Strauss, of course, are far removed from the streets of Spanish Harlem. Visits to such places make me wonder whether their residents will ever be “citizens” in any sense recognizable to James Madison. But I recall that my ancestors had similar worries about another swarm of Latin newcomers: the Italians.

The arguments against Hispanic immigration today seemed just as plausible against Italians around 1900. Most Italian-Americans came not from the region of Dante but from the backward, anti-republican south. They were more likely than any other immigrants of that era to stay here only temporarily: in some years as many as seven returned to Italy for every ten who arrived in America. They hated formal education, and did their best to avoid not only our secular public schools but our Irish-controlled Catholic schools. Italian-Americans scored as low on IQ tests then as blacks do today. Their average family income was even lower than the blacks’—at the height of Jim Crow. Many of our grandparents thought that they must be innately inferior. Irish-American priests were known to call them “dagoes” in public; one said that “Italians are not a sensitive people like our own.”

But these “inferior” newcomers were to move into the mainstream with dizzying speed, partly because they concentrated on work, not politics. They often provided valuable services as strikebreakers. Doubts about their national loyalties proved groundless; in 1943 Italian-American soldiers enthusiastically invaded their ancestral homeland. By the 1960’s, Italian-Americans had larger family incomes than WASPs or German-Americans.

Once they did get involved in politics, Italian-Americans resisted welfare-state bribery and ethnic-bloc voting. For decades, Republican politics in parts of New York and Connecticut has largely been a contest between liberal WASPs and conservative Italians. In 1984 Geraldine Ferraro

was rejected not only by New Yorkers, by Italians, by Catholics, and by women—but even by New York Italian Catholic women.

More important than politics, of course, is music. Deep-South WASPs have given us rock, the blacks' revenge for slavery. Italian-Americans have given us Caruso and Toscanini.

Like the Italians, today's Hispanic immigrants are selective about which features of modern American culture to absorb. A surprisingly large number of them manage to send their children to private schools, rejecting both the anti-religious conformism and the linguistic separatism of the public schools. Bilingual education is almost entirely a public-school phenomenon—not a response to marketplace demand, but to court rulings and regulations written by our decadent native establishment. Under a voucher system it would vanish.

Today's boisterous Hispanic adventurers remind me of the 18th-century Scots-Irish immigrants who bypassed the WASP tidewater for the frontier. The tax revolts and anti-euthanasia protests of the 21st century will need them.



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There are very few universal truths in life, but one of them is "There is nothing so permanent as a temporary change."

New York City, for example, instituted its rent control policies to avoid placing undo hardships on the families of our boys who were off fighting World War II. Those same laws are still on the books in 1990, and thousands of New Yorkers are still paying the same rent they were paying in 1940.

After the brutal crackdown against the Solidarity freedom movement in Poland in 1981, the United States granted Extended Voluntary Departure (EVD) to thousands of Poles in this country—"just until conditions improved in that country." Solidarity now runs Poland, democracy is on the march in Eastern Europe, and the Poles we allowed to

stay "just until things improved" are staying in droves. Nor will they be asked to return home. The people we permitted to live here temporarily have now established roots in their communities, we are told, and it would be unfair to ask them to leave.

For the past six years a similar bill has been floating around Congress to grant EVD to more than one million Salvadorans and Nicaraguans who are illegally in the United States—of course, "just until things improve down there." The most recent incarnation of the bill passed the House last fall and is due to be voted on in the Senate this spring.

Despite the fact that things have already improved in those countries, the bill's sponsors, Congressman Joe Moakley (D-MA) and Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) are still pushing this piece of legislation as hard as ever. Last year's democratic elections in El Salvador and the dramatic results of the February 25 elections in Nicaragua haven't convinced the bill's supporters that EVD is a bad idea whose time has passed. Reality has simply sent them scurrying for new and creative reasons for not enforcing laws against illegal immigration.

Whereas just a few months ago EVD was being sold as a humanitarian insurance policy for people who lived in countries with repressive governments or civil war, we are now being told that more than a million illegal aliens should be allowed to remain here for economic reasons. That, of course, is precisely why the overwhelming majority of Salvadorans and Nicaraguans came here in the first place. It is the reason virtually *every* illegal alien comes to the United States.

U.S. refugee law is very specific about what constitutes a legitimate refugee: a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, ethnicity, or political belief. The law is very clear that poverty alone is not sufficient reason for coming here, or being permitted to remain, either temporarily or permanently.

The proponents of EVD now claim that these illegal aliens should be allowed to remain "temporarily" because sending them back at this time would cause economic hardship not just for the aliens, but for their countries as well. It is a strange reversal of roles: the same people who for years have been insisting that Salvadorans and Nicaraguans were legitimate political refugees, not economic migrants, are now asking that they be allowed to stay in the United States for economic reasons. It's a safe bet that if and when there is some economic improvement in those countries, these same advocates will argue that we can't ask these "temporary" residents to leave because they have now established roots in this country.

As the economic and military superpower of this hemisphere, the United States has an important role to play in helping these emerging democracies succeed. However, we cannot absorb Latin America's excess population. As the proponents of EVD now admit, the forces driving Latin Americans to the United States are economic, not political. These problems are not limited to El Salvador and Nicaragua—they are endemic to the entire region. To accommodate their exploding populations, the nations to our south will have to create 52 million new jobs over the next thirty years, and do it from an economic base one-fifth that of the United States.